

[Jazz Music, Chicago Style]

[?]

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Project worker Sam Ross

Project editor

Remarks

W3663

FORM D

Extra Comment

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Sam Ross

ADDRESS 713 Rush Street

DATE March 30, 1939

SUBJECT Jazz music, Chicago style

NAME OF INFORMANT Arnold Freeman

None

FORM B

Library of Congress

Personal History of Informant

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

No. Words

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Sam Ross

ADDRESS 713 Rush Street

DATE March 30, 1939

SUBJECT Jazz music, Chicago style

NAME OF INFORMANT Arnold Freeman

1. Ancestry -
2. Place and date of birth -
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates-
5. Education, with dates -
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates -

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7. Special skills and interests -

Acting

8. Community and religious activities -

9. Description of informant-

Is about five feet seven, well built and wiry, with an olive complexion punctured with a thin black moustache. His hair is black.

10. Other Points gained in interview

Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview Jazz Music

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

No. Words

[?]

May 26 1939

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Sam Ross

Library of Congress

ADDRESS 713 Rush Street

DATE March 30, 1939

SUBJECT Jazz music, Chicago style

1. Date and time of interview -

March 16, 1939 - in the afternoon

2. Place of interview -

In a beer tavern on the corner of Balbo and Wabash.

3. Name and address of informant -

Arnold Freeman, 1140 North La Salle Street

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. -

None

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you -

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. -

We went out of the Blackstone theatre where the informant had been rehearsing to a beer tavern on the corner. One part of the establishment was a restaurant with slick tables and new fixtures of a modernistic tone; The other had a regular bar and hard wooden booths where you could sit and be served. It was no different than hundreds of other places with the regular nickel slot victrola and a bad selection of records.

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FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

No. Words

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Sam Ross

ADDRESS 713 Rush Street

DATE March 30, 1939

SUBJECT Jazz music, Chicago style

NAME OF INFORMANT Arnold Freeman

(Note: I had obtained this interview before we had been given instructions as to how they should be obtained and before these forms had been given out. This is not a verbatim report, but it is rather in keeping with the informants speech, and since I had taken copious notes, it is not far off from a verbatim report. Some of the questions, especially in form B. I could not fill in due to my not knowing what the forms would ask for.)

Bud Freeman (informant's brother) was born April 13, 1906 in Chicago. He lived in Austin practically all his life. So did the MacPartland brothers (Jimmy and Richard), Jim Lannigan and Frank Teschmaker. Bud played sax, Jimmy MacPartland cornet, Rich Mac Partland

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banjo and later guitar, Lannigan piano, and Teschmaker hot violin and later sax and clarinet. These are the men who became the nucleus of the critic-termed Chicago style. Critic-termed because if you tell them that they created a style in jazz music they will laugh at you. They just played, that's all, and did not think of themselves as having been revolutionaries in music and creating a style. Now, perhaps, with various critiques being written about jazz and with the greater conscious evaluation of jazz as a vital form of music a greater mass of people being more interested in good hot jazz, they might accept themselves as the originators of a style.

1

Going back, Bud used to hear Earl Fuller's Negro band at Navy Pier. That was his first influence. He was nine years old then. There was a cornet player in the band who was his idol. He pulled a stunt of having his feet and body tied to a chair and he would play his cornet so loud and powerful that it seemed like he blew himself right out of those knots. That got Bud. He was always crazy about music.

At the time mother played piano and Bud played drums. He was pretty punk in school but he was nuts about music. His teacher in sixth grade saw that and she gave him a ukelele and she encouraged his musical talent.

He met Jimmy MacPartland at Austin high school, Bud didn't go more than two years altogether. Now Jimmy's father was a music teacher and Bud began taking lessons from him on a C melody sax. But he wouldn't study. Played more his own way, the way he felt like playing. It was a hard way to play he found out later. He had this kind of a talent. Two days after he got the horn he heard Paul Biese on a recording of Rose and Bud played the whole piece, with his own improvisations, right back.

Teschmaker also went to Austin high with Bud. He was a serious violinist, playing in the school orchestra. When the boys organized their first band to play at the school dances on Friday afternoons in the girls' gym, Tesch played hot fiddle. He probably played about

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the first hot fiddle. But Tesch got the idea that a fiddle was an icky 2 instrument. Everybody else had that notion too about a fiddle then. It was a very icky instrument. So Tesch got an alto [sax?] and played along with Bud. None of the others knew much about their instruments. They just played, and they played pretty good, too, but they were all bad readers. Tesch however had a firm instrumental knowledge due to his violin studies. He was about the only guy in the outfit who could really read music on sight. Bud was a bad reader. He would have to improvise from memory of a tune, sort of feel his way through. Maybe that and his talent gave him a certain originality so that when he finally learned how to read notes on sight he was really so good that he is now called about the greatest white tenor sax man in the business. But Tesch would improvise around the notes, give those banal tunes something. He was a very frustrated guy, like Bix Beiderbecke, and you could sometimes feel what a frustrated guy he was in his instrument. And it wasn't sax frustration. Maybe it came because he knew so much more about music than the others. Maybe he wanted to get at the impossible like Bix and he went nuts trying.

Anyhow, by the time Bud quit school, Jimmy MacPartland was a Western Union boy; Rich worked in a bank; Tesch was still going to school. Tesch had a lot of trouble with his parents about his music. So did everybody also except the MacPartland brothers. Maybe because everybody else came from middle class families. When Tesch brought home his horn his father said that if Tesch didn't buckle down at school he'd throw the horn out of the window, and Tesch said he might as well be thrown out with it 3 because he'd jump out after it anyhow.

The way the setup was then, Rich got a banjo but later switched to guitar. Lannigan played piano and he was pretty well grounded musically, but he wasn't very hot, then later he switched to base horn. So Dave North, a printer's apprentice, took Lannigan's place at piano. Dave Tough somehow got together with the Austin gang, although he lived in Oak Park. He was playing dance jobs when he was still in knee pants. At night, going to work, Dave would put on his long pants. This was the nucleus of the Chicago style. And they called themselves the Blue Friars, which played about 1924. Later Floyd O'Brien,

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a trombone player from the south side, who had been playing on jobs when he met the kids, joined them. After that the others who are indentified with Chicago style brought their influence with them and had them sifted through the Blue Friars and the style was developed and furthered.

At the time the original bunch was influenced by the records of King Oliver, McKenzie's Mound City Blue Blowers, Frankie Trambauer, and the Wolverines with Bix Beiderbecke. They used to go to the Spoon and Straw, a little ice cream parlor where most of the high school kids would congregate, and listen to those records. That was their only way then of knowing what good jazz was. The big white band at the time was Dick Voynow's (piano) Wolverines. And in that band was Bix. He became the greatest influence at the time.

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Then they started to hit the night spots on the south side. There was a club there then called the Apex. There the great Bessie Smith sang; Joe Smith, who influenced Bix a lot, played trumpet; and don't ask what boogie woogie is but they had a guitar player, Saint Cyr, who played that way. He was terrific. They also went to the Sunset club where they heard Armstrong, Earl Hines, and Carol Dickerson.

That was the beginning. The first one to get a job of any importance was [Jimmy?] MacPartland. He probably had the most guts and the best personality. He was always sort of the leader of the band. He took an audition with the Bamboo Inn orchestra, which used to be located on Madison and Kedzie, and he landed a job there. Later, the whole outfit, including Jimmy went up to Lost Lake in Wisconsin and played there all summer. All this times they were creating the so-called Chicago style. Each guy was an individualist. They had a deep respect for each other, which is necessary for good jazz playing, and when one of them took off a solo improvisation he knew he couldn't get lost from that solid background. In fact he would be inspired to better playing, more original. Despite the mentioned influences, all they did was learn from the great musicians of the day but they couldn't copy. That's why they drove Red Nichols nuts later on when some of them played

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and recorded for him. Because they thought Nichols was icky, a copyist with no originality. And Nichols was a big name in those days.

The first big break among the Austin gang was when Bix left the Wolverines and Jimmy MacPartland replaced him. That's why you can see the close resemblance between Jimmy's playing and Bix's. The boys in the Wolverines must have influenced Jimmy a lot and Bix had influenced them. But Bix was great and nobody could have a better influence. Then the original outfit got together again playing for Husk O'Hare on WHT. After that they played at the White City ballroom and there Milt Mezzrow came in on sax. They were all about twenty one years old then. Beiderbecke had heard about a kid band that was knocking them dead at White City and he came in once from Hudson Lake with Trambauer, where they were performing, to hear them. He stood listening to these crazy kids blowing their [heads?] off with his eyes and mouth wide open. The gang was thrilled knowing that Bix came down specially to hear them.

After that they began to work for Thelma Terry at the Golden Pumpkin which used to be located on Madison and Hamlin. Krupa came in then on drums and Bud Jacobson on sax. After that they began to separate, sometimes working, most times not. Eddie Condon came up from a small town in southern Illinois and he got the guys together to make recordings, which are now famous.